

ANNE'S HUNT FOR THE GOLDEN CROWN

KEVIN SULLIVAN
&
LESLIE GOLDMAN



BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
L. M. MONTGOMERY

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

The Hunt for the Golden Crown

Adapted By: Leslie Goldman

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Anne of Green Gables*

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CHAPTER ONE

It was just after dawn and the morning was hazy. Dawson's Field was silent, except for the faint chirping of sparrows, and some light footsteps crunching in the grass.

Gilbert crept through Dawson's field. He hopped over a stone wall, looked around, and then pulled something out from the bib of his overalls. It was a sparkling crown! He chewed on his bottom lip, and glanced over his shoulder.

He walked toward a large oak tree, and hid the crown in its crook, looking around, again. Then he ran back home.

Later that day, on the schoolyard, Gilbert stood in the middle of a group of his classmates. Anne, Diana, Felicity, and Felix were all there.

"The rules are simple," Gilbert told them. "First, we meet at ten o'clock tomorrow, at Dawson's Field. Second, I'll give the signal, and 'The Hunt for the Golden Crown' will begin." Gilbert looked at his friends. They all listened, attentively. He smiled. "Third, whoever finds it will be crowned this year's King or Queen."

"You hid the golden crown in the woods, didn't you?" asked Felix. Gilbert grinned, and shook his head. "I'll never tell," he said. Anne leaned close to Diana. "The crown isn't really gold, is it?" she whispered. "No one knows. It's golden and very old," said Diana.

"But remember the most important rule of all. The Hunt for the Golden Crown is a secret and must never be revealed to anyone not in the group," said Gilbert.

"Nobody else?" asked Anne.

"It's our secret," said Gilbert.

Felicity frowned. "Does that mean we can't tell a grown up?" she asked.

"Especially grownups. It's our secret," said Gilbert.

Felix bubbled with excitement, hopping from one foot to the other. Then he grabbed a stick and brandished it like a sword. He jumped up onto a tree stump and he waved the stick around, poking at the air. "I'm going to find it. I'm going to be King," he shouted.

Felicity scowled at her little brother and pushed him off of the tree stump. "No you're not," she said. "This year, I'm going to find the crown." She crossed her arms over her chest and smiled.

Diana elbowed Anne. "Queen Felicity? We'll never hear the end of it," she said.

"Don't worry. Now that I know all the rules, I intend to find the crown and be Queen," said Anne. She looked at Felicity, and raised her voice. "And no one is going to stop me," she finished.

Anne and Felicity locked eyes and smiled. They could hardly wait for the hunt to begin.

CHAPTER TWO

The school bell rang and Anne and her friends filed into the schoolhouse. They sat down in their seats, and Hetty King began to take attendance.

“Victoria Appleby,” she said.

“Here, Miss King,” said Victoria.

Miss King made a swift tick in her book, with her pen.

“Lloyd Archer,” she called. “Here, Miss King,” said Lloyd. Miss King marked the page again.

“Diana Barry,” said Miss King. She was met with silence. “Diana Barry?” she repeated. She glanced around the room, until her eyes rested on Diana, who was deep in conversation with Anne.

Miss King frowned. “Diana! Anne! Would you stand up please,” she said. Anne and Diana gasped. They jumped to their feet. Miss King walked towards them, slowly.

Miss King let out a deep sigh, before she spoke. “I can see that this is going to be a difficult day. Class has only just begun and already you girls have managed to break two rules,” she said.

Anne and Diana looked at each other. Two rules? What was Miss King talking about? They were thoroughly confused.

Anne spoke first. “Two rules?” she asked. “But we were just whispering, Miss King.”

“Yes, and because you broke the rule about ‘not talking in class’ you weren’t paying attention. So Diana broke another rule.” Miss King looked around the room. “Can anyone enlighten us here?” she asked.

Predictably, Felicity’s hand was the first one to shoot up. “Diana didn’t say ‘Here, Miss King’ when you called attendance,” Felicity said, in a sing-songy voice. She looked at Diana and Anne, and smiled.

“But we all knew she was here,” said Gilbert.

“Yeah, we could hear them whispering,” said Felix.

Anne shot Felix a dirty look. Felix shrugged. “I mean, we could tell they were here,” he said.

“You’re supposed to raise your hand when you have something to say,” said Felicity.

“Oh, sorry,” said Felix. Then, he realized that he had done it again. “Oops, I mean.” Felix looked around the room. His hand shot up in the air. “Sorry,” he said, again.

Miss King rolled her eyes and let out a deep sigh. “Thank you, Felix. Diana, perhaps you can tell the class why we have rules,” said Miss King.

“To help us learn, Miss King?” said Diana.

“Exactly,” said Miss King. “You may sit, now,” she said to the girls. Gilbert raised his hand. Miss King called on him, and returned to her desk.

“Do we really need rules to learn, Miss King? Because. . .I mean... shouldn’t we just learn because we want to?” asked Gilbert.

“But rules allow everyone to learn. If someone’s talking in class, she might miss something important. And every enterprise you enter into has it’s own set of rules. Take grammar. Anne, please give us an example of a rule of grammar,” said Miss King.

“I before E except after C?” asked Anne.

“Good. Now Felix, how about music? Can you think of a music rule?”

“Ah, ah, Oh, I know. The scale is always in the same order. Do, re, mi, fa, sol. . Felix stopped, and scrunched up his eyebrows. He scratched his head, and strained to remember what came next.

“La!” said Anne, Gilbert and Diana.

“La, ti, and then do it again,” said Felix.

“That’s correct,” said Miss King.

“But those are,” Anne started. Miss King shot her a nasty look, so she stopped, and raised her hand. “But those are important rules, Miss King. If I were a rule, I wouldn’t want to be a paltry rule about not talking. I’d want to be a very grand rule that advances learning or inspires the imagination,” said Anne.

“Well, let’s see if rules can inspire this class’s imaginations. Your assignment for the weekend is to write an essay entitled ‘Rules’.”

The class groaned.

“How many words does it have to be, Miss King?” asked Felix.

“That’s up to you,” she answered.

“What?” asked Gilbert. The rest of the class looked around in confusion.

“I don’t understand,” said Felicity.

“Do you want the essay to explain the rules or do you want our opinions about them?” asked Diana.

“Do you want us to list all the rules for grammar?” asked Gilbert.

“Do you want,” started Felix.

Miss King shook her head, and quieted the class down. “Those questions are for you to answer. All I will say is that I expect the completed essays on my desk first thing Monday morning,” said Miss King.

Anne made a face at Diana. “All this because I whispered?” she whispered.

CHAPTER THREE

After school that day, Anne and Diana walked home through the apple orchard.

“I don’t know what to write. I mean, rules are just there. What’s to say about them?” asked Diana.

“I’m going to say that most rules are ridiculous and restrictive, and they don’t help people learn,” said Anne.

They stopped at the base of an apple tree and Diana hoisted Anne up so she could reach for a branch. Anne shook the branch, in her attempts to get an apple loose.

“Well suppose there was a rule that you couldn’t sit under an apple tree. How would Newton have discovered gravity? If I were a teacher there would be no rules at all,” said Anne. Anne shook the tree branch again. An apple fell right on Diana’s head.

“Ouch,” shouted Diana. She rubbed her head, giggling.

Anne took a big bite out of the apple. She and Diana climbed over the wall of the apple orchard.

When they hopped down, they saw Gilbert, Felix, Felicity and some other friends from their class. They were all gathered around a big oak tree by the path, staring at a piece of paper that was tacked to the tree. The paper was a warning saying that farmers would be burning in that area and they should all stay away.

“What’s going on?” asked Diana.

“The farmers are burning tomorrow,” said Felix. “We have to stay away from this whole area.”

They stared at the small map. It showed them which areas were off limits.

“And that includes Dawson’s field,” said Felicity.

“But what about the Hunt for the Golden Crown?” asked Anne. She took a bite of her apple, and passed it to Diana.

“We’ll have to cancel it,” said Felicity.

“No we won’t,” said Gilbert. “They’re burning the fields. We’re going to be safe in the woods. We’ll be perfectly safe.”

“Even if we’re not near the fires, they’ll be lots of smoke,” said Diana. Diana took a bite of the apple, and passed it to Felix.

Felix made a face and shrugged his shoulders. “Smoke never hurt anyone,” he said. He bit into the apple, and passed it to Felicity.

“That’s not true. Smoke can be very dangerous,” said Felicity. “Eew,” she shrieked, when she realized that she was holding the communal apple. She made a face, and passed the apple back to Anne, without taking a bite.

“But we’ll be in the woods. We won’t be that close to the smoke,” said Anne.

“I don’t care. I won’t be there. And neither will Felix,” said Felicity.

“Awww! Come on, Felicity,” said Felix.

“Felix. This is a rule and we’re going to obey it,” said Felicity.

“Then you’ll have to miss out. I’m the King and I make my own rules. The Hunt for the Golden Crown goes on as planned!” Gilbert announced.

Everyone cheered. Everyone, except for Felicity and Felix, that is.

CHAPTER FOUR

Back at Green Gables, Marilla was cooking dinner. Not wanting to begin work on her homework assignment, Anne sat at the kitchen table, keeping her company. Her writing notebook and school books were piled high in front of her.

"I'm at a loss. A veritable loss," sighed Anne, looking at the opened, blank notebook before her.

Marilla was kneading dough. She glanced up at Anne and noticed that she was fiddling with her pencil, and not doing much writing.

"It's as if my mind has been drained of all creativity," said Anne.

"Staring at a blank page isn't going to make the words appear," said Marilla.

"It isn't fair," whined Anne. "Miss King didn't give us any guidelines. How am I supposed to know what she wants us to say about rules?"

Marilla walked to the stove, and stirred the stew. Anne snuck a berry from the large bowl on the table.

"Maybe she wants your own opinion. You certainly have plenty of those," said Marilla. She returned to the table and began to roll out the dough.

"That's how I began. I explained with the utmost tact that most rules are useless and only get in the way of genius and inspiration," said Anne.

Marilla looked at Anne, eyes wide. "Well, that's certainly an opinion," she said.

"But it only took one paragraph. She should have told us how much she wanted us to write," said Anne.

"So you complain about rules in your essay and then complain to me that she didn't give you any?" asked Marilla. She went to the cupboard to search for the pie tin. Meanwhile, Anne took another berry.

“Do you think she didn’t give us any rules on purpose?” asked Anne. Marilla walked back to the kitchen table with the pie tin. “Very likely. Perhaps

Hetty wants you to discover things for yourself In my opinion, that’s the sign of a good teacher,” said Marilla.

“I suppose so. But it’s a singular shame she’s so interested in rules,” said Anne. Marilla put the pie tin on the counter. She added the flattened dough, and then cut

around the edges. “Well I’m interested in your books being cleared away, the table set, and Matthew being called in for dinner. Unless you think setting the table before dinner is one of those useless rules,” said Marilla.

Anne cleared her schoolbooks off of the kitchen table. “Of course not, Marilla. I would never willfully ignore your rules, no matter how much they contribute to the destruction of my independent spirit and good nature.”

“Good,” said Marilla. “I think.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Anne went into her bedroom. She put her books and notebook on a small table, in front of her mirror.

Sometimes, when Anne was alone, she imagined that her mirror reflection was not a reflection at all, but really, another girl. Today was one of those times and the girl was named Katie Maurice.

“You haven’t written very much,” Katie said, from the mirror.

“I haven’t any time for a conversation now. I must get Matthew from the barn,” said Anne. She turned from her mirror, and headed toward the door.

“He’s going to be vastly disappointed in you,” said Katie.

Anne stopped and turned. She crept back to the mirror. “Vastly disappointed about what?” she asked.

“That you’re going to break a rule,” said Katie.

“What rule?” asked Anne.

“About going to Dawson’s Field tomorrow,” said Katie.

“He won’t find out,” said Anne. “The ‘*Hunt for the Golden Crown*’ is a secret. We’re not allowed to tell anyone.” Anne headed for the door again.

“That sounds like a rule to me,” said Katie.

Anne looked over her shoulder. “So what if it is?” she asked.

“The warning to stay away is a rule too. You can’t obey them both. Which one are you going to break?” asked Katie.

Anne sighed. She walked back to Katie. “I don’t know. I have to think about it,” she said.

Anne stared at the mirror. Soon, Katie turned back into a reflection of Anne. Anne stared at herself, feeling confused and slightly guilty. She backed away, turned, and left her room.

Anne marched straight out to the barn to find Matthew. She opened the barn door and looked for him. He was nowhere in sight. “Matthew? Matthew?” she called.

Ahhh! Oooo! A scarecrow popped up from the other side of the stall.

“AAAHH!” Anne screamed, and jumped back. She fell into a pile of hay.

Matthew stood up beside the scarecrow. “Sure hope it scares the crows as much as it did you!” he said. “They were getting used to the old one.” Matthew wiggled the scarecrow. It was dressed in a woman’s hat and blouse. “What do you think?” he asked.

Anne tried to compose herself. It was a challenge, considering that she was still stuck in the pile of hay. “I think startling me that way just now was a low-down and dirty thing to do,” she started. Then she smiled. “And I think our scarecrow looks an awful lot like Rachel Lynde.”

Matthew looked at his scarecrow. “Really? My goodness, those crows won’t stand a chance,” he said.

Anne laughed, and stood up. She brushed the hay off of her clothes and out of her hair.

Matthew came round the stall. Actually, only half of the scarecrow was complete. Matthew leaned the straw figure against the stall, and tried to wrap the skirt around it. It wasn’t going so well.

“Oh. These things should come with instructions,” he said.

“Here,” said Anne. She took the skirt while Matthew held the scarecrow upright. She connected the waistbands hooks and eyes.

“Matthew, do you think all rules should be obeyed?” asked Anne.

“If possible. Rules aren’t made without reasons,” said Matthew.

“But suppose there were two rules that were in conflict. Then what would you do?” asked Anne.

“Hmm, not sure. Pick the most important one, I guess.” Matthew gave Anne a sideways glance. “Care to tell me what these rules are about?” he asked.

“I’m not allowed to. It’s a secret,” said Anne.

“It’s hard to help you if you don’t tell me,” said Matthew.

“Oh Matthew, it’s just a silly kid’s thing,” said Anne.

“Funny how kids complain about all the rules adults make and then go and make up a bunch of rules for themselves,” said Matthew.

“But we make sensible rules,” said Anne. She fastened the last button on the skirt, and took a step back so that she could look at her work. “So, what do you think?” she asked.

Matthew wiggled the scarecrow. “Very scary. Thank you for your help.” He leaned the scarecrow up against the stall. “Well, let’s not be late. In this family, eating dinner on time is one of Marilla’s most important rules,” said Matthew.

“Everywhere I look there’s a rule,” said Anne. She started toward the door. But when she passed the scarecrow, she brushed up against it. It flopped down on top of her. “Oh oh, no dinner for you — you’re already stuffed,” said Anne. She giggled, set the scarecrow up right, and walked back to the main house.

CHAPTER SIX

The next morning, Anne sat at her table, in front of her mirror. She brushed her long red hair. Suddenly, her mirror image stopped brushing. It turned back into Katie Maurice.

“You’re going on ‘The Hunt for the Golden Crown’, aren’t you?” asked Katie, from the mirror.

Anne gulped. “I’m not sure it’s any of your business,” she said.

“I knew you would,” said Katie.

“And why not? ‘The Hunt for the Golden Crown’ is nowhere near the fires. I see no reason to spoil our fun just to obey a silly rule that’s utterly unreasonable,” said Anne.

“Alright... If you say so,” said Katie.

Anne finished brushing her hair, and placed the brush on the table. “Nothing will happen. . . except I’m going to find the crown and be Queen,” said Anne.

Katie curtsied at Anne. “If you say so, Your Majesty,” she said.

Anne made a face at Katie, and then spun away from the mirror.

Anne ran outside to look for Marilla. She found her pumping water from the well. Anne paused before she spoke. “I’ll be back this afternoon,” she said.

“Don’t be too late. Matthew’s helping with the burn. He’ll be in the fields all day so there’ll be extra work for you,” said Marilla. “Did you finish your essay?”

“Oh yes, I finished by saying that some rules are good but most are bad. Especially rules that are made for children,” said Anne.

Marilla looked at Anne, surprised. “I hope you’re not expecting Hetty to give you high marks for those pearls of wisdom!”

“I’m only speaking my mind. You can’t give someone a bad mark for that,” said Anne. She turned and hurried down the path away from Green Gables. Her mind was racing a mile a minute. As she walked, she mumbled to herself, “I don’t see why I shouldn’t get a high mark for speaking my mind. . . as long as it’s written neatly and without spelling errors.”

As Anne crossed under a tree branch, her mind wandered off, further. “It’s not my fault that school would be even better if there were no rules at all,” she said.

“No rules at all?” Came a squeaky voice from above. Anne looked up. The statement seemed to come from a dryad, who was sitting on a branch. He looked like he was made of wood, except he was talking. He had red rosy cheeks, and some funny looking coveralls on.

“Hello Dryad. What are you doing up there?” said Anne.

“Listening to you. And as hard as I try, I can’t imagine a school with no rules at all,” said Dryad.

“Then you should work on your imagination,” said Anne. She put her hands on her hips. “If I were a teacher...”

“If you were a teacher?” said the Dryad. “Wonderful! Then a teacher you shall be.” He leapt down toward Anne. And then something magical happened. Anne and

Dryad were shrunk down. They each became the height of a blade of grass. They sat in a path on the ground, next to a hollow log.

“Ah,” sighed the Dryad. “Now that’s much better.” He put his ear up against the log and motioned for Anne to come over. “Listen,” he whispered.

Anne leaned in toward the log. She heard some muffled shouts coming from inside. It sounded just like a mob of unruly students.

“It’s a class of young spirits in need of a teacher to take them on a field trip,” Dryad explained.

“You want me to be the teacher?” asked Anne.

“Why not?” said the Dryad. “You’d make a wonderful teacher. All those ideas.. . an excellent communicator. . .You were born to it.”

Dryad grabbed Anne’s hand and led her to the entrance of the hollow log. “A splendid opportunity awaits!” he said.

“I’ll do it! I’ll be a teacher,” said Anne.

Anne walked to the entrance of the log. She looked in. She took a deep breath. “Watch out! Move it, look out,” she said. She strode into the log.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Anne walked into the hollow log classroom. It looked like her classroom, except that the desks and chairs were made out of toadstools. Her class consisted of five students: a potato, a carrot, an onion, a pea pod, and a mushroom. They were running

around, pushing and shoving each other. Anne's jaw dropped. She was aghast at the chaotic scene. "Oh no," she moaned.

Spud, the potato, sat on top of Mush, the mushroom, who was whining. The Onion's name was Teardrop. She brought a handkerchief to her eyes and sounded like she was crying. The pea pod was clearly a big fat snob. And Carrot Top was babbling atop of a toadstool.

"Will learning help us to grow?" asked Carrot Top. "No! All we need is good soil, strong sunlight, and a few drops of rain."

"Get off me, Spud," shouted Mush.

"Hush, Mush," said Spud.

"Oh, Carrot Top that's so beautiful," blubbered Tear Drop.

"It's a load of root rot!" shouted Pea Pod. "If we can't learn, how can we ripen?"

Everyone started talking at once, and nothing made any sense.

Pea Pod pushed Carrot Top, who fell off the toadstool, and onto Tear Drop. Tear Drop wailed loudly, as they both rolled into Spud and Mush. Spud and Mush grunted and groaned. The entire group was splayed out on the floor.

Anne looked from the vegetables to the Dryad. "You want me to teach these. . .these. . ." she was at a loss of words.

"Botanical spirits," said Dryad. "They might be a wee bit unruly, but you're a teacher now. You can handle it. Here's the register. At the other

end of this log you will find a path that leads to the Cave of Bubbling Water.”

“The Cave of Bubbling Water?” asked Anne.

“A fascinating spirit phenomenon. Spirits come from all over the world to see it,” said Dryad.

“To see what?” asked Anne.

Dryad pulled a book out from his back pocket. He handed it to Anne. “Everything you need to know is in this guidebook. There’s a path that goes to Acorn Hill.” The Dryad leaned into Anne. “But whatever you do.. .don’t let anyone step off of the path. It’s not safe,” he warned.

Anne took the book and looked at Dryad in disbelief.

“Good luck,” he laughed. He ran out of the log. Anne faced the class. They were chattering away to each other. It was as if she didn’t even exist to them.

“Good morning,” said Anne. They ignored her.

“Good morning,” Anne tried again. This time, she raised her voice a bit louder. No one paid any attention to her.

Anne cleared her throat and said, “Good Morning,” again.

Finally, she tapped at the toadstool desk, in order to get the vegetable spirits’ attention. It made a loud booming sound. Finally, the spirits turned around.

The looked at Anne and gasped.

“It’s a human,” said Mush.

“A cannibal!” shouted Tear Drop. “She’s going to eat us!” “No one peels me!” warned Spud.

“She does have exquisite hair,” said Carrot Top.

“My name is Anne, and I am your teacher,” said Anne. “Uh, oh! Now she’s going to list the rules,” said Carrot Top. Anne smiled. “You’re

wrong. I don't believe in rules."

The vegetable spirits were silent for a minute. Did this funny looking human say what they think she said?

"No rules?" asked Pea Pod.

"Are you absolutely sure you're a teacher?" asked Carrot Top.

"Who cares. She said no rules." Spud tapped on Mush's head. "Hear that, Mush? No rules!"

"And I mean it," said Anne. "You needn't raise your hand when you want to speak and I'm not even going to take attendance."

"Hey, how will you know who I am?" asked Spud.

"You're a potato. And as soon as you get off the mushroom, we'll go on our field trip," said Anne.

"Spud — they call me Spud. That's my name," sniffed Spud.

"Which you would have known had you called attendance," said Pea Pod.

Anne thought about that for a moment. Were these vegetable spirits right? "Yes, that's true," she answered. "But wouldn't it be far more interesting if you introduced

yourselves like Spud did?" she asked.

"I'm Mush and I'm a mushroom. . . although I feel like a squash," said Mush.

"Oh, stop whining, fungus face!" said Spud.

"My name is Tear Drop," said Tear Drop, sniffing. "I'm an onion."

"Carrot Top is a carrot and I'm a pea pod," said Pea Pod. "My name is ____"

"Pea Pod!" shouted Carrot Top, Mush, Spud and Tear Drop.

"Exactly," Pea Pod nodded. "I don't need another name. I'm very comfortable with who I am."

“Good. Thank you for sharing that information. Now once we are in the cave, there is one rule we must follow for our own safety. It’s the only rule that you will ever hear coming from my mouth,” said Anne.

Anne noticed that Pea Pod and Carrot Top were whispering. She paused, and was about to tell them to stop. But then she thought for a minute. Telling them not to whisper would mean imposing another rule. She couldn’t do that. So she let them continue, and tried to talk over their voices. “And that rule is to stay on the path at all times,” said Anne.

She was met with a flood of voices. Spud, Mush and Tear Drop had a lot of questions. “Do we have to walk in single file? Do we have to stay together? Do we have to keep quiet in line?” they asked.

“I don’t know. She seems pretty weird to me,” said Pea Pod. “Hey, Carrot Top, what do you think of this teacher?”

“I don’t know Pea Pod. She seems kind of weird to me, too,” said Carrot Top.

Anne tried to follow the voices, but everyone was talking so fast. And everyone was talking all at once. It all sounded like nonsense.

“What? Slow down. One at a time,” Anne said.

“Do we have to stay together?” asked Mush.

“And walk in single file,” said Spud.

“And keep quiet in line?” asked Tear Drop.

“I’m not interested in making rules. Just so long as you stay on the path. Now, let’s go,” said Anne. But before she had finished her sentence, the vegetable spirits had dashed out of the log. Anne looked around the empty classroom and sighed. “Whew! That went well,” she said. Then she spun around and ran to catch up with her students.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Anne followed the class to the Cave of Bubbling Water. The place was incredible! She had never seen anything like it. A narrow windy path lined the bubbling hot springs. Exotic plant life sprouted from every direction.

Anne noticed a patch of green fingers. What was this all about? She consulted her guidebook. ‘Finger grass,’ she read. “Hello!” she waved. Then she gasped - because the fingers waved back!

Anne walked past another plant. It barked and growled at her. She jumped back and looked down at her guidebook once more. “Ah,” she read. “Must be a dogwood plant. Down boy!” The plant stopped barking, and it sat down. Anne smiled.

Next, Anne noticed a bed of flowers. She crouched down to study them. “Umbrella flowers. I fail to see why they call you umbrella flowers,” she said. Suddenly little umbrellas popped up out of the top of the plants. “No wonder all the spirits come here,” Anne marveled.

She edged closer to the steamy bubbling pit of the hot spring. She looked down into the center. Suddenly Spud and Mush came running down the path. They almost ran right into Anne!

“Careful,” said Anne. But they sped away. “Spud! Mush! Come back here!” she shouted.

Spud and Mush walked back, slowly. Their heads were hung low.

“The path is too narrow. You shouldn’t run,” said Anne. “Is that a rule?” asked Mush.

“It sure sounds like a rule to me,” said Spud.

“What would happen if you tripped and fell in?” asked Anne. Spud and Mush looked down into the steamy bubbling water. “Ah, we’d be cooked,” said Spud.

“Maybe we should walk,” said Mush.

“There, you see,” said Anne. “If one behaves sensibly, one doesn’t need to make up rules.”

“Help, help!”

Anne heard shouting in the distance. She glanced around and saw Onion, Pea Pod, and Carrot Top. Anne ran down the path towards them.

Spud and Mush watched her go. “That doesn’t look like walking to me,” said Spud.

“How come teachers don’t have to follow the rules?” asked Mush.

“I don’t know. Come on,” said Spud. They started to run after Anne. But after a few steps they bumped into each other. They stumbled, and waved their arms around, trying to catch their balance. They steadied themselves, barely escaping the steamy water.

“Whoa!” shouted Spud.

Mush and Spud stared into the pit. Then they looked at each other. “Let’s walk,” said Mush. They started walking down the path.

“This isn’t much fun,” said Spud.

“No, but it’s safe,” said Mush.

CHAPTER NINE

Anne ran towards the screaming vegetable spirits.

Tear Drop was hopping up and down. She pointed up at Pea Pod and Carrot Top, who were trapped on the leaf of a giant lily, which towered high in the air.

“What happened?” asked Anne.

Everyone started to explain at once. “They left the path. What does it look like? We’re trapped. This lily doesn’t like us...”

“Wait. I can’t understand if you all speak at once,” said Anne. Tear Drop raised her hand.

“Tear Drop,” said Anne.

“Oh, it was terrible, Miss. They left the path to look at that lily. . .” Tear Drop

explained what happened. While she had stayed on the path, Pea Pod and Carrot Top had stepped off of it, so that they could get a closer look at the large lily that sat on the ground.

“The flower was down on the ground like it was supposed to be,” said Tear Drop. Tear Drop’s voice was raised to a squeaky plea. “But Carrot Top tossed a pebble

right into the lily’s center. That’s when it started to grow. . .and grow. . .and grow. .

As the plant lifted itself, Pea Pod and Carrot Top trembled, and held onto the leaf for dear life.

“Now there’s no way up there,” said Tear Drop.

“You were supposed to stay on the path,” said Anne.

“No one told us that,” said Pea Pod.

“I did tell you. But you were too busy whispering to each other to hear me,” said Anne.

“That’s not our fault,” said Carrot Top. “You should have had a no talking rule.”

“Then we wouldn’t be trapped,” said Pea Pod.

“Uh, oh. Pea Pod’s upset. I think she’s going to split,” said Tear Drop.

“Split?” asked Anne.

“Ahhh!” yelled Pea Pod.

They looked up at Pea Pod. She was bulging at the top of her seam. Suddenly, a pea came shooting out. It arched high above her and landed inside the lily. What

happened next was truly amazing. The lily began to sink down. The leaves reached ground level and the two vegetable spirits dashed back to the path.

Anne hugged Pea Pod and Carrot Top. “Thank goodness you’re safe. I owe you an apology. I’m the teacher and it was my job to make sure everyone heard my warning,” said Anne.

“Hey! Come look! Over here! We’ve found Acorn Hill!” said Spud.

“We’re coming,” yelled Carrot Top.

“Walk, don’t run,” Anne told everyone.

Anne and the vegetable spirits walked along the path. Soon, they came to the base of a huge towering hill, consisting entirely of acorns.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Carrot Top.

“Spud? Mush? Where are you?” asked Anne.

Spud and Mush peaked over the edge of the hill. They were balanced atop of it.

“We’re up here!” called Spud.

“I told you not to leave the path. Come down at once,” said Anne.

“No rules! No rules!” shouted Spud.

Mush joined him. “No rules! No rules! No rules!” they both chanted.

“I said come down,” shouted Anne.

But then the rest of the vegetable spirits started chanting. “No rules! No rules! No rules! No rules! No rules! No rules!”

Mush lost his balance. “Look out!” shouted Anne. But it was too late. He stumbled.

AHHH!

Spud made a grab at Mush, but he missed. They both slid down the hill, causing the entire structure to collapse.

It created an avalanche of acorns, which swept down over the other vegetable spirits, knocking them off of the path and down toward the bubbling water. Then, the acorns formed a sea of their own. Anne was buried. She raised her head and called out to her students. “Spud? Carrot Top? Where are you?”

CHAPTER TEN

Anne coughed and choked. She was back in Dawson's field. The sun was out, but it was really hard to see because the air was so smoky. Anne coughed again and looked around, frantically. What was going on?

"Pea Pod? Can you hear me?" she shouted. "Where are you?"

"Over here," said Diana.

"Diana? What is all this smoke?" asked Anne.

"Are you all right?" asked Diana.

"I'm fine," said Anne.

"The others are over here," said Diana.

Anne and Diana walked over to Gilbert and their other friends. They all sat on a stone wall, which surrounded Dawson's Field. Smoke from the nearby fires billowed over the area.

"You're late," said Gilbert. "Lucky we waited. Now let's get started."

"We can't," said Anne. She peered out onto the smoky field. She shook her head. "It's too dangerous. That's why the grown-ups made the rule. We'll have the hunt another day."

"I make my own rules," said Gilbert. He put his hands on his hips. "The hunt is going on."

"They wouldn't have made the rule if it weren't for our safety," said Anne.

"If you're scared, you don't have to join in. You can go home," said Gilbert.

"Look at all this smoke. You can hardly see. Someone could get lost or hurt," said Anne.

"I think Anne is right," said Diana. "We can have the hunt next weekend."

"Fine. If that's what you all want," said Gilbert.

Suddenly, Felicity came scrambling down the path to Dawson's Field. "Felix? Where are you?" she yelled.

They all looked up. Felicity came running toward them. She was out of breath. "Where's Felix? Is he here? He left me a note saying he was going to find the crown."

"We haven't seen him," said Gilbert.

"Oh, no! He probably thought he was late and went straight into the woods," said Felicity.

"Don't worry. I'll go and find him. He can't have gone far," said Gilbert.

"No. You mustn't put yourself in danger," said Anne. "We'll have to tell a grownup."

"Who?" asked Diana.

"We'll go to where they're burning. Matthew will organize a search party," said Anne.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Meanwhile, Felix wandered around Dawson's Field. It was so smoky, he could hardly see where he was going. "Hello? Anyone there?" Felix coughed. He waved his arms out in front of him.

Anne, Gilbert, Felicity, Diana and the other students ran to find Matthew. They told him that Felix was missing.

"But what were you doing there in the first place?" asked Matthew.

"Well, we. . ." Gilbert started.

"Please, Matthew. We can't tell you that," said Anne.

"It was my fault. We should have stayed away," said Gilbert.

"Do you think Felix is all right?" asked Felicity.

"I'm sure he's fine," said Matthew. "Don't worry. We'll find him."

Matthew went out into the forest to look for Felix. It was smoky and hot, but he persisted. "Felix? Felix?" he called. But except for the crinkling of burning leaves, and the faint hum of the roaring flames, the woods were silent. He trudged on.

A few minutes later, Matthew heard a small voice, shouting.

"Over here! Help me!" shouted Felix.

Matthew spotted Felix, and lumbered toward him. Felix let out a deep sigh of relief.

Matthew carried Felix out of the woods and set him down in the field, where all of his friends were waiting. Anne gave him a glass of water. Felix took a gulp, choking and sputtering a bit.

"Ew. You smell like smoke!" said Felicity.

"Am I okay, Matthew?" asked Felix.

"We'll have a doctor check you out. Looks like the worst you'll suffer is the taste of smoke for a few days," said Matthew.

Felix looked up at Matthew, wide eyed. "I was really scared. Thank you," he said.

Matthew ruffled Felix's hair, and smiled. Then, he walked over to Anne and her friends.

"We're in a lot of trouble, aren't we?" asked Anne.

"You know what you did wrong," said Matthew. "You should have heeded the warning about not going into the woods. But you did right in coming to get us. It's smart to talk to a grownup when you think there might be danger involved. So let's just say you've learned a good lesson."

"Thank you, Mr. Cuthbert," said Gilbert.

Matthew turned away. He started to leave, but soon, he turned back. He pulled something out of the bib of his overalls. It was the golden crown!

"Look what I found while I was searching. Thought you might need it," said Matthew. He handed the crown to Anne.

"You know about the hunt?" asked Anne.

"The hunt's been around for a long time, remember? Who do you think made up the rule about not telling any grownups?"

Matthew walked away. Speechless, Anne and her friends watched him go.

"I've reached the very definite conclusion that life is often quite confusing," said Anne.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Anne stood in front of her class the next day. She read her essay out loud. “All of us have discovered a lot about rules,” said Anne. “In the past few days we’ve discovered. .

Next, Felix stood up, and read from his essay. “That some rules protect you from danger. Other rules help us live together.”

Then Anne took over again, “And make sure everyone was treated fairly. I was...”

“Surprised to discover that there were so many rules, and that every rule has a reason,” finished Gilbert.

“There are so many rules that it might be hard to obey them all. But from this moment on, I am determined to break as few of them as possible. Thank you.” Anne finished and sat down as the class applauded.

Anne leaned over to catch Diana’s whispered congratulations, but then she caught herself. She glanced up at Hetty, who raised one eyebrow. Anne clamped her hand over her mouth. She and Hetty smiled at each other.

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